Promoting & Managing Effective Collaborative Group Work
“It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind too) that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.”

(Charles Darwin, 1809 - 1882)
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“Cooperative learning is the use of small groups through which students work together to accomplish shared goals and to maximise their own and others’ potential.”

Johnson, Johnson and Holubec
Cooperative Learning in the Classroom, 1994

Today’s ever changing society requires young people to be flexible and creative, solve problems, make decisions, think critically and communicate ideas effectively. Research has shown that an important factor in helping pupils to develop such important lifelong thinking skills and personal capabilities, alongside curricular knowledge and understanding, is the opportunity for them to not only engage in multi-media rich learning activities1, but also to work productively and effectively in groups. Cognisant of this, the Northern Ireland Curriculum publications ‘Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 2’2 and ‘Active Learning and Teaching Strategies for Key Stage 3’3 suggest a varied range of strategies for teachers to integrate into the daily classroom routine as a means of not only promoting collaborative learning but also of improving pupils’ motivation, behaviour and thinking skills. However, many of these strategies are dependent on pupils having the skills to work successfully within teams and groups. To quote DfES guidance:

“When productive group work is a regular feature of lessons, pupils:
• Fully develop their understanding of an idea because they have tried to explain it to others or argue a point of view;
• Are more likely to develop social and team working skills.”

Pedagogy in Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools, Unit 10: Group Work
Department for Education and Skills, 2004

However, while pupils may often sit in groups in our classrooms, they do not always work well collaboratively, as observed by Ken Richardson, Senior Research Fellow at the Open University:

“The virtual absence of group work is one of the most startling findings of a range of research into both primary and secondary schools. Children may work in groups but they very seldom work as groups.”

The Making of Intelligence, 1999

1 Multimodal Learning through Media: What the Research says (CISCO, 2008)
2 http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stages_1_and_2/altm-ks12.pdf
Results from research substantiate this. For example, the large scale 4 year-long SPRinG study, which was carried out with 980 Key Stage 1 pupils (5-7 year olds) in Brighton, 1876 Key Stage 2 pupils (7-11 year olds) in London and 1403 Key Stage 3 pupils (11-14 year olds) in Cambridge, established that...

“There is a wide gap between the potential of group work and its limited use in schools. Groups in classrooms are often formed without a strategic view of their purpose, and teachers and pupils have concerns about group work.”

Successful group work is, therefore, not an easy classroom management option. Indeed, it demands a lot of skill on the part of teachers. Many often feel reluctant to implement it either because of lack of confidence, experience and insufficient training, or because they don’t wish to risk undermining their discipline or control of challenging classes or difficult pupils within a class. Nevertheless, given the current drive to raise achievement and promote more autonomous, active and constructivist learning, it is important that teachers be prepared to ‘let go’ and develop the confidence to try out more process oriented learning such as collaborative group work.

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4 Improving the Effectiveness of Pupil Groups in Classrooms – Social Pedagogic Research into Grouping (SPRinG), (Blatchford, Baines, Galton & Kutnick, 2005)
Findings of the SPRinG study and other research projects into collaborative group work (e.g. Kagan, 1992, Stevens and Slavin, 1995, Johnson & Johnson, 1989 & 1999) highlight many benefits for both teachers and pupils.

From the perspective of teachers, it can help them to:
- enhance their own professional skills and confidence in adapting group work strategies for different purposes and tasks
- shift the emphasis from teacher-centred to more pupil-centred learning by enabling pupils to work in small groups with a common goal
- empower pupils in group situations to engage in peer teaching, learning and assessment to show what they know, understand and can do and identify what they have yet to learn in a ‘low risk’ situation
- devote more time, once pupils are able to demonstrate increased effectiveness and autonomy in group work situations and require less teacher intervention, to reflect on and think strategically about their teaching
- promote improved teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships
- celebrate collaborative efforts with pupils

In terms of the pupils, collaborative learning can help them to develop their thinking and problem solving skills by encouraging them to:
- explain and negotiate their contributions to a group
- take turns in discussion while exploring a topic within a limited time frame
- apply their knowledge to practical situations
- use exploratory language to try out new ideas
- support and build on each other’s contributions, acknowledging and utilising the strengths and talents of individual pupils

The UK SPRinG project and earlier work carried out in the USA by Stevens and Slavin (1995) are just two examples of research which have highlighted a range of other positive effects of successfully managed group work:
- Far from hindering learning, the evidence shows that it actually supports academic progress and higher conceptual learning including:
  - closing the gap in performance between boys and girls and pupils of different attainment levels
  - increasing academic progress in lower attaining pupils
  - raising achievement levels of gifted and talented pupils
- It has also been proven to promote improved pupil behaviour as it actively engages pupils in sustained on-task interactions with fewer opportunities for distraction. Pupils realise that group work can be fun, lively and enjoyable if it is well-structured.
- It promotes the development of important life and social skills including self and mutual respect, organisation, cooperation, negotiation, flexibility, compromise, delegation, accountability and leadership.
Particularly valuable lessons learned from the SPRinG study, point to the important:

“The effects of aspects of group composition, stability and size, classroom layout and seating arrangements, group work training for pupils and ways in which teachers can encourage and evaluate group work.”

‘Improving the Effectiveness of Pupil Groups in Classroom’
ESRC Project Ref: L139 25 1046
End of award report, 2005, p 14
Blatchford, Galton, Kutnick & Baines

More specifically, in order for collaborative group work to be successful, this and other research studies highlight the need to:

3.1 Provide pupils with clear structures in which to work together as a group

Using strategies such as the following are a good way to gradually introduce group work to pupils, including to challenging class groups or to pupils with limited experience of collaborative learning:

- **‘Think, Pair, Share’** – this activity, the advantages of which are well set out in the ‘Headguruteacher’ blog, involves pupils first of all spending time on their own considering a problem or issue before pairing up with a partner to compare notes. This helps them to deepen their understanding of a topic, issue or problem in a secure non-threatening setting and use the opinions of others to help further inform their own before sharing the outcomes of their deliberations with a group or the rest of the class.

- **‘Listening and Talking Triad’** – Working in threes, each pupil takes it in turn to be the talker, questioner or recorder. The talker explains something, comments on an issue or expresses opinions. The questioner prompts and seeks clarification. The recorder makes notes and gives a summary report at the end of the conversation.

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5 Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stages 1 & 2 and Key Stage 3, p 70
‘Snowballing’ – By involving pupils in a gradual build up towards full group collaboration and consensus, this activity encourages everyone, including pupils who are normally more reluctant to speak, to first of all come up with their own ideas, then share them with a partner and finally in a larger group. This process ensures that everyone’s views are represented. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On your own …</th>
<th>write down as many ideas/ways that you can think of to …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a pair …</td>
<td>compare your lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a four …</td>
<td>select what you consider to be the 2 most important ideas/ways to …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an eight …</td>
<td>agree and give a reason/reasons for your final choice …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Establish and constantly reinforce clear ground rules and procedures so that pupils know how best to communicate and relate to each other in a situation of mutual trust and respect.

As an increase in pupil social interactional skills as a result of participation in group work is well documented in research (e.g. Slavin, 1991), time spent on any of the following type of strategies is well worth the effort!

‘Framed’ – a task which invites pupils, at the end of a joint activity in the early stages of developing group work, to contribute their thoughts on what they feel they did well and what they feel they didn’t do so well. However, it is important to emphasise that they should name the behaviour and not the person! For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I did to help the group</th>
<th>What I did that hindered the group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● …</td>
<td>● …</td>
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<tr>
<td>● …</td>
<td>● …</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What others did that helped</th>
<th>What others did that hindered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● …</td>
<td>● …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● …</td>
<td>● …</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A possible extension to this activity might be to appoint one or two pupils to observe and listen as groups work together. Individual pupil feedback could then be compared with that of the observer(s).

Establish what makes ‘good discussion’ by asking pupils to consider a set of possible talk rules and inviting them to categorise them under the headings ‘Yes’ (for those which would promote good collaboration), ‘No’ (for those which they feel would not be helpful) and ‘Maybe’ (for those which might be helpful). The following set of Talk Rule Cards originally available from the Teaching Expertise website, now Optimus Education (http://www.optimus-education.com), may help with this task:

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6 Ibid, p 63
| Change your mind if you hear a better argument | Look at and listen to the person who is talking |
| Say things to annoy people | Try to stick to the topic |
| If you know something is important, don’t tell because other people copy your idea | Ask questions if you aren’t clear about what has been said |
| The whole group, not just one member, is responsible for successes or failures | Always agree with your friends |
| Make up your mind straight away and don’t change it | Good talkers should talk most |

- **Draw up a class contract with the pupils**, during which they use the outcomes of the ‘Framed’ task, to agree for themselves the desirable behaviours and skill sets for all future group work to be successful. This will not only give them a sense of ownership but also a benchmark, for use in plenaries, against which to assess how well they are progressing in group work activities. A class contract might look like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We agree to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in a positive and supportive way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be polite and friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take turns to speak and make suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen carefully when others are speaking without interrupting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at the person who is speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the views of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for the positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a reason if we disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take on a role (e.g. recorder, timekeeper etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate to complete the task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Display the contract prominently** so that it can act as a good reference point for those moments when reinforcement is necessary and pupils need to be reminded of their own ground rules.

- **Catch the pupils being good!** Using praise to accentuate the positive will do more to reinforce the desirable, as opposed to undesirable, behaviours and skills of group work e.g.
  - “Well done, Jonny! You are being a great timekeeper. I like how you are giving your group regular reminders of how much time they have left to complete the task.”
  - “Excellent job, group A! I like the way you are listening carefully to each other’s opinions and suggestions without talking over each other!”
3.3 Support the language of group work by providing language frameworks

As not all pupils may automatically come to the group work situation with the full range of language skills needed to make effective contributions and support successful collaboration, it is important to provide them with the opportunity to develop and apply these in practical and meaningful contexts.

One way of doing this may be to provide them with a series of sentence stems which they can use as a scaffold to help them structure and improve the quality of their talk and discussion. These could be listed under key headings such as ‘Making Suggestions’, ‘Inviting/Giving an Opinion’, ‘Challenging’ and ‘Seeking Information’ as in the examples on the following page.

An alternative approach might be to involve the pupils in devising a bespoke set of sentence stems based on a combination of their own and the teacher’s suggestions. As with the class contract, these could then be displayed prominently on a classroom noticeboard or in the centre of group work tables for referral on a needs only basis. Less confident and less experienced pupils could also be given their own individual copy.

Research carried out by Professor Neil Mercer and Paul Warwick at the University of Cambridge as part of the ‘Thinking Together Project’ has resulted in a series of useful materials, including downloadable lesson plans, for use by teachers to help promote skills of collaborative group work and exploratory talk with pupils. These may be downloaded from the project website at: http://thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/resources/
### Expressing an Opinion
- I think that …
- In my opinion …
- I believe this because …
- The reason(s) why I think/believe this is/are …
- From my perspective/point of view, I …

### Inviting an Opinion/Response
- What do you think/feel about …?
- What is your opinion?
- What are your views on …?
- Do you agree?
- Have you any comments you wish to make on …?
- Does anyone else wish to offer an opinion?

### Expressing an Opinion
- I think that …
- In my opinion …
- I believe this because …
- The reason(s) why I think/believe this is/are …
- From my perspective/point of view, I …

###去重复
- What did you mean when you said …?
- What are your reasons?
- In other words, you think that …
- If I understand you correctly, you think that/your point is …
- Am I correct in assuming that …

### Paraphrasing
- So, what you are saying is that …?
- So, you mean that …?
- In other words, you think that …
- If I understand you correctly, you think that/your point is …
- Am I correct in assuming that …

### Seeking Information/Clarification
- What did you mean when you said …?
- What are your reasons?
- Could you explain that again please?
- I’m sorry, I didn’t understand what you said about/meant by …
- Would you mind repeating what you just said about …?
- Excuse me; I’m not quite clear about …?
- Could you be more specific about …?
- Could you give an example of …?
- Could you expand a little on what you said about …?
- What happens if …?
- Where/when/how can I …?

### SUMMARISING
- First we looked at … then we considered …
- Based on our discussion/exchange of ideas/evidence we conclude that …
- Having completed the task, we believe that/our findings are …
- In conclusion, we feel/believe that …
- To sum up …/in short …
3.4 Take account of class dynamics and the nature of the group task when setting up groups

As factors such as pupil experience, ability/disability, communication skills, age, gender and cultural background (e.g. English as an Additional Language – ‘EAL’) can all impact on group dynamics and the intended outcomes of the group task, it is important to weigh these up when considering group composition. This will help get the right mix for the task and nip any potential areas of conflict in the bud before they are allowed to surface, interfere with pupil learning and impact on the potential success or failure of the collaborative task.

DFE guidance points to the benefits and limitations of different types of groups. For example, ‘friendship groups’ may be worth considering in situations where sharing and confidence building are priorities, ‘mixed groups’ may be a good way of promoting diversity and gender equality while ‘random groups’ may encourage pupils to work with others outside their normal groupings and expose them to different ideas. Some group tasks may also benefit from the participation of pupils of different ages who can bring different experiences, perspectives and levels of maturity to the joint activity. This can have two additional advantages. Firstly, it provides younger pupils with the opportunity to learn from their older peers who can impart knowledge and, hopefully, act as role models for modelling emotions, demonstrating skills and self-confidence e.g. public speaking and leadership. Secondly, older pupils, in their turn, learn to treat younger pupils with respect and consideration and give them protection, when needed.

3.5 Have clearly defined tasks

It is important that pupils understand the rationale for the group task and have clear parameters in which to work. This will include:

- Ensuring that the task involves challenge, encourages pupil involvement, interdependence and is fairly divided between the group members
- Sharing the objectives
- Giving a brief description of the task
- Explaining what will make a good outcome
- Emphasising the importance of positive cooperation and communication to help achieve the collaborative goal
- Making pupils aware of the resources they need and which are available to them to help engage with and complete the task e.g. computers, i-pads, flip chart, markers etc
- Establishing clear group management tools such as timescales and group roles

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7 Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools, Unit 10: Group Work, pp 10--12
3.6 Allocate roles or invite pupils to select/rotate a role

When setting up collaborative learning activities, it is important for teachers to use their professional judgement to decide whether it is best to assign roles or to let the pupils decide for themselves within their groups.

However, letting pupils decide for themselves can sometimes lead them to repeatedly playing safe and choosing the role they feel most comfortable with, as opposed to stepping outside their comfort zone and choosing another position which, while daunting, might equally encourage them to develop other skills. To help overcome such situations, the teacher might opt for role rotation to ensure that all pupils experience several roles.

It is important that every pupil understands his/her role within the group. The following role play cue cards, also available to download in colour and in poster format from the ‘Learning and Teaching’ webpage of the BELB’s Induction and EPD microsite at http://www.belb.org.uk/Teachers/i_learning_and_teaching.asp?m=9, may help pupils understand what they have to do.

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**Sample Group Role Poster**

**The Reporter**

It is your job to report on the groups ideas. You will need to:
- Record information clearly and accurately
- Summarise the main ideas
- Structure feedback clearly
- Report back to class/teacher

You could say:
“In our group the key points were…”
“Our conclusion was that…”

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**Sample Group Role Prompt Card**

“In classrooms where a sense of community is built, students are the crew not the passengers.”

Chris Watkins
## Prompt Cards for Collaborative Group Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP LEADER</th>
<th>NOTE TAKER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The group leader makes sure everyone knows what to do to complete the task.</td>
<td>It is the note taker's job to make notes for the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Group Leader needs to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Note Taker will need to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Keep the group on task</td>
<td>- Listen carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ensure that everyone has a chance to participate</td>
<td>- Write clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage everyone to listen and consider others views</td>
<td>- Summarise main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summarise the outcome for the group</td>
<td>- Check the accuracy of notes with the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Useful Group Leader cues:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Useful Note Taker Cues:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What do you think about …?”</td>
<td>“Could you repeat that point?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That’s interesting, but we need to get back to our original point.”</td>
<td>“Is that important?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What’s your opinion/feeling Kate” (etc)</td>
<td>“What is the best way to record that?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVER</th>
<th>RESEARCH RUNNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is the observer’s job to look at how the groups carry out their tasks:</td>
<td>It is the Research Runner’s job to get resources and information for the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Observer will need to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Research Runner will need to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Watch closely what the groups do</td>
<td>- Collect and collate information and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be impartial/give no personal comments</td>
<td>- Seek clarification from the teacher to help the group understand and complete the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Comment constructively on how the group has worked</td>
<td><strong>Useful Research Runner Cues:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Useful Observer Cues:</strong></td>
<td>“What resources do we need?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Group ‘a’ worked well together because they ….”</td>
<td>“Shall I ask the teacher to clarify this for us.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Group ‘b’ spent too much time on …”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIMEKEEPER</th>
<th>PRESENTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is the timekeeper’s job to keep the group on task:</td>
<td>It is the presenter’s job to report on the groups ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Timekeeper will need to:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Presenter will need to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give regular time checks</td>
<td>- Record information clearly and accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage the group to keep to time</td>
<td>- Summarise the main ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Indicate when a task is about to end (2 minute warning)</td>
<td>- Structure feedback clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Useful Timekeeper Cues:</strong></td>
<td>- Report back to class/teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We need to finish this task and move on to the next.”</td>
<td><strong>Useful Presenter cues:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We have 2 minutes to get our main points together.”</td>
<td>“Does this sound OK?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“In our group the key points were…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Our conclusion was that …”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the allocation or assumption of roles is intended to support pupils’ engagement with each other towards successful completion of the collaborative task, it does not preclude any teacher involvement. Through careful observation and monitoring of group interaction and progress, the teacher can determine when he/she needs to step in and facilitate without undue interference. Below are some suggested intervention strategies for a range of commonly reported challenging group work situations!

- **What to do if a group lacks interest and motivation!**
  If pupils in a particular group appear very lack lustre about the activity and working together as a team, then it is important to:
  - Re-examine the nature of the activity. Is there sufficient ‘buy in’ from the pupils? Is it exciting and meaningful enough? Are they confident that the intended outcome is worth the effort? Are the learning processes in place? Does it need an injection of competition?
  - Remind pupils of the rewards to the group when the task is completed, e.g.
    - The satisfaction that they will have delivered on a key aspect of the topic for the benefit of the whole class
    - Top place in an inter-group class competition
    - A celebration of their achievement through a group presentation to the whole class, the school, parents etc
  - Reaffirm your belief in the group and the skills that each group member can bring to the task with examples of how they have successfully applied those skills in previous situations
  - Examine the team make up and, if all else fails, reshuffle pupils to ensure that each group has the right mix of skills and personalities to make a good whole!

- **What to do if a group is dominated by one person!**
  Sometimes groups can be dominated by one pupil who, by nature of their confident personality and skills of articulation, can make it difficult for others, especially those more reticent, to intercede with thoughts and opinions of their own. In order to offset the potential negative impact of this type of scenario on group dynamics, teachers should work with the group to establish ground rules for pupil participation which might include the following:
  - Establish a rota for each group member to speak in turn and remind pupils not to interrupt each other. Emphasise that everyone has a right to speak and have their contributions valued. If necessary, refer the pupils back to their agreed class contract for group work which may already contain these types of ground rules.
  - Make it clear to the pupils that they may only speak a second time after everyone has had their turn.
  - If all of the above fails, then it may be necessary to speak to the individual pupil in private or consider a reshuffle so that all dominant high contributors within a class are in one group.
• What to do when pupils are not cooperating!
Equally, there may be occasions when pupils are not cooperating in their groups as well as they might and may need to be referred back to the acceptable social behaviours for group work which they agreed for inclusion in their own class contract (p 9). They will be more likely to regroup and sort the situation out for themselves if ownership of the problem is put squarely back in their hands! For example:

> “Remember what you agreed! If you are to work well together and complete the task, it is important for you to be polite and friendly to each other, take turns to speak, listen to each other’s opinions ....”

• What to do when pupils are off task!
There may be occasions when groups may be ‘off task’ and the teacher may need to refocus them with a reminder such as:

> “Ok, let’s think back to what you have to do? Who can remind the group of the task?”

This kind of prompt also puts the ball firmly back in the pupils’ court.

• What to do when pupils get stuck!
In other instances, some groups may get stuck and may need a gentle nod in the right direction by encouraging them to:

> “Explain where you are with the task so far. 
So, in other words, you are /have...
Ok, now exchange ideas on what you think you might need to do next.”

By rephrasing the pupils’ ideas and asking them to explain further, the teacher is encouraging them to think more deeply about the task, thereby promoting the development of the pupils’ metacognitive skills. Additionally, the teacher is also modelling good group discussion techniques in that they are helping pupils to realise that it’s OK for them to probe for more information and clarification if they are having difficulty understanding each other’s ideas and concepts. The pupils could also be referred back to the language frames (p 11) to support them in their clarification and discussion of various options.

• What to do if pupils are not working to the timeframe!
Sometimes, too, pupils may be spending too much time on one aspect of the task to the exclusion of others and may need a time prompt to urge them to move on. For example:

> “How much time do you have left? What else do you still need to do?”
3.8 Provide closure to the group activity

How group work is concluded and reported upon is very important as it …

“… can make the difference between students feeling that they are just going through their paces and the sense that they are engaged in a powerful exchange of ideas.”

Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p 107

It is, therefore, very important to provide adequate plenary time to draw group work to a conclusion so that pupils:

- see that it is valued
- have an opportunity to show and tell how the collaborative activity has helped extend their knowledge and understanding
- can demonstrate how they have contributed to the development of the topic for the benefit of the whole class

This could be done in a range of ways including inviting each group to:

- Reflect on and verbally summarise, in turn and perhaps through its designated reporter, what it has learned in terms of both the learning processes engaged in and the intended learning outcomes. The teacher could note key points from each group in bullet point form on a flipchart page and pin this to a noticeboard for the pupils to refer to during the learning and teaching lifespan of the topic
- Contribute an idea/suggestion/outcome of their work and rotate through the groups until all new ideas etc have been exhausted. These could also be annotated on a flip chart page for classroom display
- Present a written summary of their conclusions on a flipchart page for posting on notice boards around the classroom
- Make a visual representation in PowerPoint, mindmap, picture or poster format etc of the outcomes of their group work for presentation to the rest of the class

For each of the above suggestions, pupils could move around the room, read and discuss the outcomes of each other’s work and perhaps add comments and feedback using post–it notes

The teacher could also:

- Answer any outstanding questions which the pupils may have
- Pull the whole thing together by providing a brief summary of the cumulative learning from the group work activity both in the context of went before and what is yet to come so has to help pupils make connections in their learning
- Congratulate the pupils on their learning
- Highlight, with examples from observation, the positives of how they worked together within their groups, developed particular skills and upheld the desirable behaviours of successful team work, as set out, perhaps, in their class contract
Once pupils are comfortable with the principles and procedures of group work and are engaging with increasing confidence and success in collaborative tasks, then the following additional approaches could be thrown into the classroom practice mix to get pupils thinking and working with each other even more!

- **‘Jigsaw’** – this activity is great for ensuring the participation of all pupils in ‘home’ and ‘expert’ groups and is an alternative to PowerPoint etc of introducing new material. For example, in History, the very topical theme of the ‘D Day Invasion’ could be sub-divided into the following 5 areas for pupil examination in expert groups - ‘1: Preparing for D Day; 2: D Day Landings; 3: The Armada; 4: Casualties; Victory in Normandy.’ Pupils could be numbered 1-5 in their home groups and invited to join an expert group to share information, knowledge and ideas on the correspondingly numbered sub theme. The experts then return to their home groups to report on their area of expertise. The activity could be extended by inviting each home group to engage in a collaborative task, the successful completion of which requires the input of each ‘expert.’

- **‘Rainbow Group’** – this activity, also explained in the DfES guidance, is similar to the above in that it involves movement between groups, thus encouraging pupils to work with a wider range of peers. Each group member is given a number or colour. Upon completion of the group task, all pupils with the same number or colour form new groups to compare what they have done in their original groups.

- **‘Envoy’** – This further variation on the above strategies entails the nomination by each group of an envoy who moves to another group to explain and summarise their ‘home’ group’s work as well as establish the thoughts and outcomes of the new group. The envoy then returns to feedback to the active listeners in their ‘home’ group using language and terminology appropriate to the theme and target audience.

- **‘Carousel’** – Working in small groups, pupils rotate to different desks each of which has a flipchart sheet with a question or component relating to a particular topic at the top. Each group has a time limit in which to discuss, agree and write down their responses, thoughts and ideas. They then rotate after the allocated time to another sheet with a different question or component relating to the topic. They have to read the responses, thoughts and ideas of the previous group, discuss whether they agree or disagree and justify with a written explanation. The group then writes down its own thoughts and ideas on the issue. If some of these stem from the previous groups’ responses, they could connect the thoughts and ideas with arrows.

- **‘Debating’** – this is a great way of getting pupils to discuss and clarify their thoughts on a particular topic and then use their skills of reasoning and public speaking to present an argument for or against a motion. The Oxford rules model (summarised at http://www.ecgi.org/conferences/fese_efmc2005/ou_rules.htm) provides an excellent framework for classroom use. There are four speakers in each team: the first speaker (proposer) introduces all the ideas of the team; the second speaker gives depth to two or three of the ideas; the third speaker presents more information on a further two ideas and the fourth speaker (opposer) argues against the points of the opposing team. All is presided over by a chairman who introduces the debate, calls on the first speaker to begin the debate and on subsequent speakers at appropriate points before inviting the rebuttal and opening the debate to the floor, the rest of the team (or class).

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8 Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stages 1 & 2 and Key Stage 3, p 12
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